



Quarterly Report
ROMANIA: POLITICAL PARTY EXCHANGE PROGRAM
USAID Grant No. 186-0021-G-00-9110-00
October 1-December 31, 2000

I. SUMMARY

Romania's November parliamentary and presidential elections yielded both predictable and surprising results. As anticipated, the Social Democracy Party of Romania (PDSR) and its presidential candidate, Ion Iliescu, won sweeping victories at the expense of the former ruling coalition. However, the extremist Greater Romania Party (PRM) and its presidential hopeful, Vadim Tudor, did unexpectedly well, denying PDSR a majority in parliament. The election results reflected both voter anger and frustration with the country's political system. PDSR's decision to form a minority government may likely continue Romania's political instability, which would stifle reforms and further alienate voters and drive them to the extremes of the political spectrum.

Political instability is a symptom of Romania's weak political leadership. Winner-take-all attitudes are common among an older generation of politicians who continue to monopolize party leadership positions. NDI has concluded that an effective way to promote change and strengthen political parties is to help young party members assume higher profiles within their respective organizations. The Political Party Exchange (PPE) Program provides young political leaders with election-related and party organizing skills to prepare them for active political participation. Training centers around study missions to the United States. NDI has organized missions on election strategy and planning and on voter contact and field operations in November 1999 and March 2000, respectively. A third mission on political communication and media relations is planned for January 2001.

During this quarter, NDI undertook the following activities:

- Conducted voter surveys during the elections to gather information on opinions about how parties communicated with voters;
- Consulted with representatives of governmental, international and nongovernmental organizations about NDI's program priorities; and
- Prepared for the third study mission to the United States scheduled for January 2001.

II. BACKGROUND

Presidential and parliamentary elections in 1996 were widely perceived as a victory for the forces of reform and progress. However, political instability within the ruling coalition ensued, stalling much-needed political and economic reforms. Voters, apparently tired of the failed promises and public infighting that crippled the government, were eager to punish the governing parties for what they perceived as four years of failure and corruption. Parliamentary and first-round presidential elections were held on November 26, and a second round of presidential elections took place on December 10.

Parliamentary Elections

As expected, the ruling coalition was swept out of power, with the Democratic Convention of Romania 2000 (CDR 2000) electoral alliance, and its largest member, the Peasants Party (PNTCD), suffering the greatest losses. More surprising was the rocket rise of the extremist Greater Romania Party (PRM). Since April 1999, voter surveys began to show high numbers of undecided voters, declining support for the governing parties and rising support for the opposition Romanian Party of Social Democracy (PDSR). The surge in PRM support came just weeks before election day.

RESULTS OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Chamber of Deputies

Party	% Votes	Seats
Romanian Party of Social Democracy (PDSR)	37%	155
Party of Greater Romania (PRM)	20%	84
Democratic Party (PD)	7%	31
National Liberal Party (PNL)	7%	30
Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	6%	27
Democratic Convention of Romania 2000 (CDR 2000)*	5%	0
Alliance for Romania (ApR)**	4%	0
Ethnic Minority Representatives	14%	18

Senate

Party	% Votes	Seats
Romanian Party of Social Democracy (PDSR)	37%	65
Party of Greater Romania (PRM)	21%	37
Democratic Party (PD)	8%	13
National Liberal Party (PNL)	7.5%	13
Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	6.5%	12
Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR)*	5%	0
Alliance for Romania (ApR)**	4%	0
Others	11%	0

*CDR failed to reach the electoral threshold of 10 percent for an electoral alliance of its size and will not be represented in the new Senate.

**ApR failed to reach the electoral threshold of 5 percent for a single party and will not be represented in the new Senate.

Most of PRM's support came from undecided voters and migrating PDSR supporters and was directly attributable to its leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Although the party was making gains in the polls before real campaigning even began, it was Vadim's performance in the televised debates that thrust the party's support into double digits.

In contrast to PDSR's and PRM's successes was the failure of the former ruling CDR to return to parliament. Reliable polls indicated that the CDR 2000 would not meet the 10 percent threshold required for electoral alliances of four or more parties to obtain parliamentary representation. If PNTCD stood on its own, the threshold would have been five percent, leading one to wonder why it chose to form an electoral alliance with five smaller parties that could not bring in enough votes to justify the union.

Also on the casualty list was the Alliance for Romania (ApR), which was formed in 1997 by Teodor Melescanu. Last year, ApR and its leader were rising quickly in the polls, but hopes for success were shot down in spring when Melescanu was implicated in a money laundering scandal.

Presidential Elections

The results of the first round of presidential elections sent shock waves through the entire political spectrum in Romania. As expected, Ion Iliescu finished first, yet no analyst or political leader was ready to believe that Vadim Tudor, a former "court poet" of deposed dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and a xenophobic senator, could make it into second place. Vadim and his party previously had never made it past 10 or 11 percent in the polls. In this election, however, they expanded their support beyond their typical base of support of older, less educated men in poor rural areas. An analysis by the Romanian Academic Society indicated that most of PRM/Vadim's growth in support came from the less well-off who are living in wealthy regions.

FIRST ROUND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Candidate	Party	% Vote
Ion ILIESCU	PDSR	36.6%
Corneliu Vadim TUDOR	PRM	28.5%
Theodor STOLOJAN	PNL	11.8%
Mugur ISARESCU	Independent	9.5%
Gyorgy FRUNDA	UDMR	5.8%
Petre ROMAN	PD	3.0%
Teodor MELESCANU	ApR	1.9%

A number of factors contributed to Vadim's success in the first round of voting. First, he distinguished himself from the other candidates through his delivery and by presenting himself as an outsider in an anti-government environment. Second, his normally extremist language was replaced with talk of national pride. Third, some analysts believe that Vadim was able to move into second place because the center-right parties failed to agree on one candidate for the presidency. The presence of several similar candidates split the vote, cutting a clear path for Vadim.

As the shock of the first-round election results set in, mainstream parties, the media and other organizations mobilized to prevent a second-round victory by Vadim. Supporting Iliescu was seen to be distasteful by the center-right parties, but Vadim's threat was finally perceived as real. The National Liberal Party (PNL), the Democratic Party (PD) and even the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) appealed to their supporters to go to the polls on December 10 and vote for Iliescu.

SECOND ROUND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Candidate	Party	% Votes
Ion ILIESCU	PDSR	67%
Corneliu Vadim TUDOR	PRM	33%

Media outlets apparently recognized that television was Vadim's most effective medium, so they simply stopped covering the race rather than give him access to it. A high-profile group of intellectuals organized an open letter to voters, appealing to them to prevent a victory for Vadim. Even the American-Romanian Chamber of Commerce, a body which has never endorsed any candidate in its 10-year history, endorsed Iliescu for president.

Governmental Transition

The changeover to a new government and a new president has proceeded smoothly. Adrian Nastase, vice-president of PDSR, was named prime minister-designate and immediately took charge of the transition. Directly after the elections, Nastase submitted a proposal to form a minority government and arrange a "non-aggression pact" with the now opposition PD, PNL and UDMR parties. The protocol establishes an understanding of the priorities of the new government and obliges PD, PNL and UDMR to pledge that they will not initiate or support a vote of no confidence during the government's first year.

The defeat of the former ruling coalition is a manifestation of the zero-sum politics practiced by an older generation of leaders. The lack of consensus building has prevented progress on key public policy issues, leaving voters angry and disillusioned with the political process. NDI's Political Party Exchange Program addresses this deficit by training promising young political leaders in election-related and party organizing skills to prepare them for higher political aspirations.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Voter Survey

NDI conducted two voter surveys during the elections to gather information about voter opinions concerning the political campaign. These surveys added to information gathered through surveys conducted during the June local elections. The first survey was held on November 26 and solicited voters' opinions about campaign techniques employed by the parties. It was designed to test whether such "impersonal" forms of communication as television and posters, which are the mainstay of parties' voter contact efforts, are contributing to the growing sense of alienation among voters.

The November survey polled 133 voters in the conservative-leaning cities of Bucharest, Brasov, Cluj and Timisoara and the social-democratic-leaning cities of Iasi and Hunedoara. Sixty-two women and 71 men of varying ages responded to the questionnaire. Preliminary results indicate that the vast majority of voters are interested in more personal styles of campaigning. When asked their opinions about door-to-door canvassing, 64 percent of those surveyed responded positively to the idea. Of those who spoke directly to party representatives or candidates during the election (15 percent of those polled), 70 percent reported that it affected their decision to support the party or the candidate.

The second survey was conducted during the second round of the presidential election on December 10. The questionnaire included a number of open-ended questions and asked voters when and for which reasons they decided to support the candidate for whom they voted. The objective of this survey was to identify the factors that led to the rise of Vadim Tudor and the PRM. NDI is currently in the process of analyzing the results; however, preliminary results indicate that Vadim distinguished himself and his message in a crowded field of candidates through his message delivery. Voters thought him more credible on fighting corruption and delivering economic equity.

Program Assessment

While in Romania to observe the elections, Program Officer Claude Zullo joined NDI's field representative in Romania for a series of meetings with civic and government leaders to discuss their future priorities and programming goals. The Romania team also planned programming activities for the next six months.

USAID All-Sector Meeting

On October 17, USAID convened a quarterly all-sector meeting. Together with IRI, NDI delivered presentations on the political parties and presidential candidates in view of the upcoming elections. NDI's resident representative also participated in USAID planning activities.

Consultations with Former PPE Participants

Throughout the pre-election season in October, NDI consulted with participants from all of its programs and organized consultations in person, when possible, and by phone or email when program participants could not travel to Bucharest. Initially, consultations focused on designing campaign plans, timelines and field plans. As the election approached, however, it was often the PPE participants – women and youth – who bore the brunt of internal party battles over candidate lists, and NDI provided support for youth and women candidates.

Preparation for PPE-3

NDI began organizing the third work-study mission, which will focus on media and communications. The mission will take place from January 15 to 29, with an orientation to be

held in Bucharest on January 13 and 14. The following is a breakdown of the participants according to party affiliation, regional location and gender:

<u>Party</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Gender</u>
Social Democracy Party of Romania (PDSR)	Cluj, Bacau, Craiova	3 women,1 man
National Liberal Party (PNL)	Bucharest, Oradea	1 woman,1 man
National Peasants Party Christian Democrats (PNTCD)	Arad, Brasov	2 men
National Alliance of Christian Democrats (ANCD)	Bucharest	1 man
Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	Cluj	1 woman
Democratic Party (PD)	Timisoara	1 woman
Alliance for Romania (ApR)	Iasi	1 man

Most of November and December were spent preparing the next group of PPE delegates for their work-study mission. NDI field staff assisted participants in developing their individual project proposals for the mission and in navigating the lengthy process of applying for U.S. visas.

In December, the NDI-DC Romania team began the process of developing the mission's itinerary, making logistical arrangements, and scheduling trainers and site visits for the workshops in Washington, D.C. and New York City. Currently, 13 training workshops on media relations and communication are scheduled, as well as site visits to major news media organizations and party communications offices.

Youth Summit Proposal

NDI Romania Resident Representative Shannon O'Connell and NDI Albania Resident Representative Gillian Gloyer are currently drafting a proposal for an advanced joint skills training program scheduled for April 2001. If funded, participants from the Romania PPE Program and NDI's Albania Political Leadership Development (ZHUP) Program would take part in a youth summit aimed at exposing them to advanced political skills and at fostering cross-regional relationships.

Registering NDI in Romania

NDI is making preparations to register its field office as an NGO in Romania. Local staff cannot receive state benefits or national health care while NDI remains unregistered, and NDI's reputation as an organization dedicated to democracy and rule of law would be damaged if it did not comply with Romanian regulations. NDI field staff met with Doru Costea, an attorney, to look into the registration process.

IV. RESULTS

Over the past three months, a number of participants in NDI's Political Party Exchange Program succeeded in being elected to influential and prestigious governmental positions and party posts, and played an important role in their parties' election campaigns.

In October, a PPE participant in the third study mission from the National Liberal Party (PNL) was selected as a member of the Central Electoral Bureau. This person is one of eight political party representatives who will serve on the bureau.

Two PDSR participants were elected to the Chamber of Deputies in the November 26 national elections. One subsequently decided to decline the post in favor of a position as counselor to President Iliescu, an important position that puts her into the national spotlight.

Six participants in the PPE program were on party lists in competitive positions (two made it into parliament as noted above). Additionally, 12 participants in the PPE Program held senior positions in their parties' campaign staffs.

A program participant from PNTCD was selected to serve on the party's interim National Bureau, the leadership body of the party. His term will be valid until the party's national congress expected in January 2001. NDI field staff worked intensively with him and his colleagues in the party's students organization to help them organize a strategy to get him on the bureau.

A participant in the first study mission co-authored PNL's manual for campaign managers and candidates around the country. The manual was clearly heavily influenced by NDI's training and included a list of "Do's and Don'ts" to win an election, which closely resembled NDI training materials.

V. EVALUATION

That a number of PPE participants were elected to parliament and were placed in influential positions within their party structures and election operations demonstrates that NDI is meeting its first objective – participating youth activists assume higher profiles in party election and communication structures, and participate actively in party decision-making processes.

The composition of the third group of participants indicates that NDI has been able to stay on target with regard to its selective factors of gender balance and regional and party diversity.

In addition to the program's stated objectives, NDI has been instrumental in creating an interparty network of young leaders. In the long run, the establishment of personal linkages among potential future leaders can lay a foundation for greater consensus building and compromise in Romanian politics. Greater cooperation among ruling parties and between

governing and opposition forces will contribute to consolidating Romania's transition to full-fledged democracy and to tackling socioeconomic problems.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

- On January 13 and 14, NDI's resident representative will conduct an orientation for the participants of the third work-study mission. Topics will include: a logistics review; briefing on U.S. culture and social customs; project consultations; background on the U.S. political and electoral systems; and an introduction to election operations and political communication.
- From January 15 to 29, the PPE Program's third work-study mission will take place. Activities will include workshops and site visits on political communication and media relations in Washington, D.C. and New York City.
- NDI will hold a post-study mission debriefing with the delegates in February to evaluate the mission.
- Upon returning to Romania, NDI will conduct follow-up consultations on participants' individual projects. Consultations will concentrate on completing the refinement of individual projects and their implementation.